

[From the 2008 Religion News Service]

COMMENTARY: CATHOLICS DEMS AND BISHOPS
IN FOR A BUMPY RIDE

(By Phyllis Zagano)

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is clearly confused about Catholic teaching on life issues. On NBC's "Meet the Press," Tom Brokaw asked her: "When does life begin?" She answered, "We don't know." Pelosi said "that as an ardent, practicing Catholic," this is an issue she's studied for a long time. "And what I know is, over the centuries, the doctors of the church have not been able to make that definition."

Pelosi is wrong, and some Catholic bishops have tried to correct the record.

I don't think the Democrats are worried.

A few years ago I rode the New York-to-Washington shuttle with a prominent politician who is a Catholic and a Democrat. He said that U.S. bishops collectively squandered their moral authority with the priest pederasty scandal. Whether for so-called "liberal" or "conservative" causes, he said, Catholic bishops are the political touch of death. No one listens to them. Including, it seems, Catholic-educated Pelosi. While the bishops try to straighten out Pelosi, who confuses medieval discussions about "ensoulment" with historical teachings on abortion, the Democrats are trying to sound like they are both for and against abortion.

Brokaw backed Pelosi into a theological corner by playing part of a televised interview in which California Pastor Rick Warren asked Sen. Barack Obama (and, later, Sen. John McCain), "At what point does a baby get human rights?"

Catholicism calls that two questions: First, is the embryo human life? Second, when does the embryo become a person? Obama addressed both questions. He said "If you believe that life begins at conception . . . then I can't argue with you." He also basically said deciding when the embryo becomes a person was above his paygrade. After seeing the Warren-Obama replay, Pelosi muddled Brokaw's question. She said—incorrectly—that the church only decided human life begins at conception "like maybe 50 years" ago.

Wrong, Madame Speaker. "The Didache" (the teachings of the apostles collected a generation after Christ) says, "You shall not procure an abortion, nor destroy a newborn child." Several church fathers—from Tertullian to St. Jerome—and the apostolic constitutions all forbade abortion. Some, however, confused matters by talking about ensoulment, asking when the human being became a human person. The ensoulment debate seems stuck in Pelosi's memory, and could be what she was talking about. She said St. Augustine thought ensoulment occurred about 30 days after conception. But trying to figure out ensoulment only leads to debate over whether abortion is merely similar to murder (killing a human being) or actually equal to murder (killing a human person).

No one knows for sure when the developing human being becomes a person with a soul. It might be at conception, or it might not. So Christianity, with other religions, has historically forbidden abortion in the face of this dilemma because the human being is always potentially a human person. The earliest fertilized egg is not a future banana or frog. It is human life. What's fascinating is that Sens. Joe Biden and John McCain agree that life begins at conception. And although neither expects (or possibly wants) help from the bishops, McCain has the most to gain by Pelosi's misstep.

Pelosi is at best misinformed, and has misinformed a nation. The Catholic bishops will try to counter her bad information. And

Catholic politicians, who have increasingly ignored a lot of Catholic teaching, don't seem to think that what the bishops say will make any difference. Seatbelts, everybody. It's going to be a bumpy ride.

HONORING DR. ROBERT F. KNAUTZ

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 2008

Mr. KILDEE. Madam Speaker, it is with profound sadness that I announce the passing of Dr. Robert F. Knautz, the founding principal of the U.S. House of Representatives Page School. "Dr. K," as he was affectionately known by many of his former students, died on September 17, 2008, at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, MD. He left an indelible mark on the House Page School, the institution he was charged with creating in 1983. The House Page Program owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to Dr. Knautz for his vision for the School, his commitment to quality education, and his compassion for students.

Dr. Knautz was a proud son of the Land of Lincoln. He was born in Chicago, IL, and remained throughout his life a devoted fan of both the Cubs and the Bears. Dr. Knautz obtained his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Northern Illinois University, earning his bachelor's degree in political science in 1963 and his master's degree in the same subject in 1970. Dr. Knautz also received his Ph.D. in education administration from Northern Illinois in 1982.

Before joining the House Page School, Dr. Knautz spent nearly two decades as an educator and administrator. He taught fifth grade and sixth grade for 2 years each, eighth grade for 3 years, and high school for 3 years. Dr. Knautz made the transition from teaching to administration in 1973, first having dual responsibility for a kindergarten through third grade building and a high school because the two buildings were adjacent to each other. Later he accepted a position at Hiawatha High School in Kirkland, IL, where he served as principal for 7 years.

As a result of a series of reforms in 1983, the U.S. House created the House Page School. Dr. Knautz saw the advertisement for the House Page School principal opening, and applied for the opening. In late July 1983, he flew to Washington to interview. He was offered the job the same day, accepted, and had to move his young family to Washington, D.C. When Dr. Knautz first arrived he lived in the Congressional Hotel (which became House Annex I and was later renamed the O'Neill Building), on the same floor as summer pages, who were moved into the hotel the previous year.

Unlike most principals, Dr. Knautz had to literally create a school from scratch. Also, since the new House Page School was scheduled to open on September 6, 1983, he had only 5 weeks to do so. Dr. Knautz was not only responsible for developing the curriculum, hiring teachers, and cleaning the physical plant; he was also responsible for purchasing textbooks, ordering supplies, and obtaining furniture. Dr. Knautz worked 15-hour days for a month to complete the preparations for the school opening and also found a place for his family to live in his rare spare time.

For Dr. Knautz, being the founding principal at House Page School was one of his proudest professional moments. He served as principal of the House Page School for 18 years until he retired in 2001. Many of the curriculum ideas and school policies he developed are used today at the School.

Dr. Knautz is survived by his wife Mary, daughter Elizabeth, son Jon, brothers Ronald and Roger, and a host of nieces and nephews. He was a loving father, a caring husband, a gifted teacher and brilliant administrator, always putting his full faith in people. The House of Representatives is forever grateful for the service of Robert F. Knautz.

TRIBUTE TO MARK GERALD

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 2008

Mr. CLYBURN. Madam Speaker, it is my honor today to pay tribute to a conscientious constituent, a dedicated educator, and an outstanding role model. Mark Gerald is being honored by the town of Mullins, SC, for his tremendous service as a coach at Mullins High School. This is a job in which he excelled, never losing focus or dedication even as he suffered debilitating treatments for colon cancer.

Mark Gerald is a 22-year employee of Marion County School District #2. He has held coaching positions for the Mullins High School junior varsity and varsity football teams and the men's basketball programs. He has served as athletic director and head coach of Mullins High School men's varsity basketball program. Coach Gerald has dedicated his adult life to the very district from which he graduated.

He left Marion County and enrolled at Fayetteville State University in Fayetteville, NC. After graduation he returned to the community and the people he loved, and has never left. Coach Gerald never turns his back on anyone in need. He reaches into his own pocket when a player needs a pair of shoes, or when a student doesn't have the basic necessities.

As a coach, Mark Gerald believes in creating a family atmosphere for his players. He spends his summer vacations traveling with his team attending summer camps and organizing the annual Mullins High School Alumni game and picnic during the month of July. He helps students young and old. For the youth, he sponsors the Raymond Felton Basketball Camp. He has successfully secured many college scholarships for his graduates. His dedication to athletics and his athletes has paid great dividends. His teams have won several state division titles and a state championship.

In July 2007, Coach Gerald was preparing for the alumni game when he fell seriously ill. He was initially diagnosed with diverticulitis, but within months he learned he had colon cancer. This spring, he successfully underwent surgery to have the diseased portion of his colon removed. Currently he is undergoing chemotherapy treatments.

Despite his health challenges, Coach Gerald rarely misses a day of work. He schedules his doctors' appointments in the afternoons and never misses any practices or games. He has never let anyone hear him complain, and he continues to smile even through the difficult